18. Narada Purana

Preface

The **Puranas** are Hindu religious texts that are part of the *Vedas*. They contain narratives about the history of the Universe from creation to destruction and the genealogies of kings, heroes, sages, and deities. Some of the *Puranas* are discourses on cosmology, geography and Hindu philosophy. They are usually written in the form of a dialogue.

Vyasa, the narrator of the *Mahabharata*, is traditionally considered the compiler of the *Puranas*. The earliest written versions were compiled during the time of the Gupta Empire (4 - 6 century CE) and much of the material may be dated, through historical references and comparative studies, to this period and the succeeding centuries.

The texts were collected from all over India and because of the similarities that are found throughout the texts, it is not possible to trace the line of influence of one *Purana* upon another, so the corpus is best viewed as a synchronous whole.

This book is an edited version after going through many websites& documents related to Puranas on the Internet. If anything found incorrect, it's lack of my Knowledge.

Thanks,

Ashok

Om Gum Ganapataye Namaha

Introduction

- It is a **Vaishnav Purana** presented in a style of dialogue between **Narad** and **Sanat Kumar** in 22 chapters. This Purana contains detailed description of major places of pilgrimage.
- **NaradPurana** is perhaps the most significant as it has been created by none other than the **SageNarad**.
- **Nardoktam Puranam Tu Naardiyam Prachachhate**

  Meaning- Narad Purana is what emerged from the lips of **Maharshi Narad**. Initially, it had a collection of about 25,000 stanzas. But, the currently available version of **Narad Purana** contains not more than 22,000 stanzas.
- The whole content of **Narad Purana** has been divided into 2 parts.
  1. The 1st part contains 4 chapters which include dialogue between **Suta** and **Shaunak**, origin of the universe, salvation, birth of Shukadev, training of the mantras, worship rituals, provisions and the results of the various fasts observed on particular days in particular months.
  2. The 2nd part contains beautiful tales related to various incarnations of **Lord Vishnu**, depiction and significance of pilgrimage centers and performing pilgrimage.

Contents

1 Penance of the Sages in Naimisharanya.....3

2 Narad Prays to Lord Vishnu 4

3 Profile of the Sage Markandeya 6

4 Tale of the Sage Markandeya 8

5 The Greatness of the Ganges 10

6 Fate of King Baahu 11

7 The Birth of Sagar 12

8 Salvation of Saudas 14

9 King Bali Defeats the Gods 17

10 Origin of the Ganges 18

11 Definition of Dharma 20

12 Description of Religious Action 22

13 Expiation for the Sins 24

14 Torture in the Hell 26

15 Descent of Ganges and Salvation of Sagar's Sons.....29

16 Description of Dwadashi Fast 31

17 Description of Fast for Lakshmi Narayana 34

18 Flagging in the Temple of Lord Vishnu 35

19 Tale of King Sumit's Previous Birth 36

20 Description of HariPanchaRatra Vrata 39

21 Descriptions of the Fruits of the Fast 40

22 Tale of Bhadrasheel Brahmin 41

1. Penance of the Sages in Naimisharanya

Once upon a time, about 26,000 **Sages** assembled in the holy ambience of **Naimisharanya**. All of them had renounced their desires and homely comforts and were worshipping **Lord Vishnu** for thebenefit of the entire humanity. During their stay in **Naimisharanya**, those **Sages** called a huge assembly to discuss about the means ofattaining all the 4 goals of life like Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha.

The great **Sage Shaunak** was presiding over the assembly. He said: "O **Sages**! We have assembled here to discuss the most crypticdisciplines of life. But it is beyond my powers to answer the questions you have put before me. Only agreat **Sage** like **Suta**, who is the most learned disciple of **Veda Vyasa**, is able to answer these questions. Presently, he lives in a hermitage in Siddhipeeth. Let us all go there and request him to preach us aboutthe cryptic disciplines of life."

Hearing these words, all the **Sages** thanked **SageShaunak** with joy. Then, led by **Shaunak** himself, all of them reached the hermitage of the **Sage Suta**. At the hermitage, **Sage Suta** welcomed them all and satisfiedtheir queries.

Sage Suta said:" O great **Sages**! I narrate to you, the great Purana, which was once narrated by the great **SaintSanatkumar** to **Devarshi Narad** and now known as **Narad Purana**."

2 Narad Prays to Lord Vishnu

Sage Shaunakasked: "Sutaji, how did Sanatkumar unfold the mystic character of the religion to Narad? Whenand where they had the meeting to hold this pious discussion? Kindly tell us in detail."

Sutaji says:

The great **SageSanatkumar**, who was free from illusions, was the creation of **Brahma**'simagination. He always remained engrossed in the worship of **Brahma**. Once, he was going towards thepeaks of the mighty **Meru Mountains** (Himalayas) when on the way, he happened to sight the sacredGanges. He was about to take a dip in the waters when **Devarshi Narad** also arrived there. **DevarshiNarad** greeted his elder brother and took bath in the river.After carrying out usual rituals, they seated there and started a discussion about the virtues of **Lord Vishnu**.

Narad asked- "O brother! How can one realize the Lord Vishnu? Who is the cause ofthis whole creation? What is the appearance of devotion, knowledge and penance? Kindly elaborate themystery of treating the guests also. Also tell me, how did Lord Vishnu effected the origin of Brahma andother gods?"

Sanatkumar says:

- In the beginning of creation, the self-illuminating **Lord Vishnu** created **Brahma** fromHis right hand side, **Rudra** from His central part and **Vishnu**, his own replica from His left hand side.
- As**Lord Vishnu** is omnipresent, similarly his illusions are also omnipresent and known with differentnames like **Lakshmi, Uma, Shakti and Chandi**. These are the powers of **Lord Vishnu**. Some peopleidentify these powers with the illusions created by the Lord whereas the **Sages** regard them as nature.
- The gods, who protect the world, are Purush, and the Supreme Being, who is above these levels, is Lord.
- Nobody else is greater than He is. From His navel even **Brahma** has originated on a divine lotus. He isthe supreme Being the eternal joy incorporating all the three virtues.

- **Narad**! Five senses- sights, sound, scent, touch and taste have originated from the ego. Ego is theorigin of other eleven senses also. These five senses in turn gave rise to five physical elements- ether, air, fire, water and earth. It was after the creation of these five physical elements that **Brahma** created thelower living beings. Then he created human beings followed by the creation of all the seven worlds andseven guards of these seven worlds. For the inhabitation of the living beings, **Brahma** also created greatmountains, plains and 7 seas.
- Towards the north of the great saline sea and towards the south of the great Himalayas is situated theHoly Land of India.
- People who worship **Lord Shiva** and **Lord Vishnu** inhabit this land. Because of theirvirtues, even the gods worship the people who populate the Indian landmass.
- Those ignorant people, who do not seek salvation despite having been born in India, have to suffer the tortures of hell as long asthe Sun and the Moon shine in the sky.
- The whole world from **Brahma** to a seemingly unimportant bladeof grass is the manifestation of **Vasudev (Lord Vishnu).**

3. Profile of the Sage Markandeya

Sanatkumar says:

- **Sage**! Faith has the greatest significance. Achievement of everything andappeasement of **Lord Vishnu**depends upon the faith. Nothing is attainable without faith. Such as a humanbeing faces inertia in the absence of life and is rendered motionless.
- Similarly, faith is like a spirituallight without which, religious actions of a man come to cease. Similarly, devotion is also known as thelife of all the achievements. It is also the giver of 4 supreme goals of life like Dharma, Artha, Kamaand Moksha.
- No action succeeds without the input of devotion and faith. Even the menial jobs done withfaith gives everlasting results. On the contrary, even the pious actions of envious people go futile. Attainment of God by envious people is impossible.
- Envy is the greatest enemy of the human being. It creates a gap as big as the one that separates the skyfrom the nether world. O **Brahma**nandan! Only those people, who remain engrossed in faithful devotionof God, attain to the abode of Vishnu. Fallen are those who, despite having the knowledge of Vedas, donot comply with the moral code of conduct of their clan. Neither Vedas nor even devotion can salvesuch people. In other words, moral conduct is everything. O great **Sage**! Devotion is like mother who isthe base of life for every living being.
- **Narad**! Company of the pious people and the saints is the best means to cherish devotion. Saints arethe teachers of the entire world. When the sins that have been accumulating all throughout the previousbirths decay only when one gets pious company and those who once get pious company experienceseternal joy.

Naradasked: "O great devotee of Lord Vishnu! Kindly relate the actions and appearance of the Lord’sdevotees to me."

Sanatkumar says:

During the period of Pralay, when all the world was inundated, **Lord Vishnu** wassleeping on a **Banyan leaf**. That scene had amazed **Markandeya**, the supreme devotee of the Lord.

The Sages asked: When all the world was inundated, how did Markandeya escape? Sutaji kindly remove our doubt?

Sutaji says: O great **Sages**! Now, I am going to narrate the tale of **Markandeya**. Listen to it carefully.

Once upon a time, there lived a fortunate **Sage** in the pious land of India. The **Sage** was famous as**Mrikandu**. He had observed a very severe penance at the holy pilgrimage center of Shaligram. Hispenance began to cause worry for Indra. So, accompanied by other gods, **Indra** reached to **Lord Vishnu**who was resting on Sheshnaag in Ksheer-**Sagar**, the ocean of milk. The gods prayed the Lord to protectthem from the radiance of **Mrikandu**.

Listening to the prayers offered by the gods, **Lord Vishnu** appeared in His 4-armed form holding conch, wheel, mace and lotus in each of those arms. His radiance was enough to beat the shine of crore Suns. His radiance caused tremendous joy for the gods who fell flat atthe feet of the Lord.

Lord says: "O gods! Get up. I am fully aware about your miseries. But your worries are meaninglessbecause **SageMrikandu** is really a gentleman. He is not going to harm you in any way. Even if thesituation arises, I am always ready to protect you." Saying these words, the Lord disappeared.

Thus,assured by the Lord's words, the gods also returned to their abode. On the other hand, pleased by**Mrikandu**'s penance, Lord appeared before him. As soon as **Mrikandu** opened his eyes, he saw **Lord Vishnu** standing before him. Lord's 4-armed, blue and radiant appearance caused great exhilarationfor **Mrikandu**. He fell flat at His feet and prayed Him with tearful eyes. Pleased with his prayers, Lord asked **Mrikandu** to seek a boon. But **Mrikandu** refused saying that he had attained salvation just byhaving His sight. Still, Lord said that His appearance never goes in vain," So, I will be your son whowill live a long life." Granting this boon, the Lord disappeared."

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4 Tale of the Sage Markandeya

Naradasked: O great Sage! Why did Lord Vishnu appear as the son of Mrikandu? What did He do as hisson? The Puranas say that during the Pralay, Markandeya had witnessed the direct appearance of Lord Vishnu's illusion. Kindly narrate these things in detail?

Sanatkumar says:

Listen **O Devarshi!** After observing severe penance, the **SageMrikandu** got marriedand received an equally virtuous and chaste wife. In the 10th month after their marriage, his wife gavebirth to an extremely beautiful baby. The baby in fact had incorporated the radiance of the Lord.

Mrikandu carried out all the necessary rituals and consecrations of the baby happily. In his 5th year, hecarried out the thread ceremony of his son and started to educate him in Vedas. His education developed all the pious virtues in his son whom he had named **Markandeya**. After finishing his education, **SageMarkandeya** also started a severe penance to please **Lord Vishnu**.

Pleased by his penance, **Lord Vishnu** blessed him with a boon of creating Purana Samhita. This is thereason why the **SageMarkandeya** is also known as **Narayan**. O Brahmins! **Lord Vishnu** did notannihilate **Markandeya** during the Pralay only to show him His illusions. It was due to this grace that**Markandeya** survived the Pralay and passed that time floating on a Banyan leaf. As long as the Lordslept, **Markandeya** kept floating on that leaf. As long as the night of the Lord lasted, **Markandeya** stayed on that flimsy leaf. At the end of the night, when the inundating Pralay receded and the Lord awakened from His prolonged sleep, He began the work of creation again. It was even more amazing for**Markandeya** to see the inundating water recede and new creation taking place. He began to pray theLord with folded hands. Pleased by his prayers, the Lord said that He always protected His devoteeseven during the most severe crises. **Markandeya** then asked about the appearance of the true devotee's of the Lord. He also expressed his curiosity to know the reasons of their birth.

Lord Vishnu says: "O great among the **Sages**!

- The greatest devotees are those who do not harm others with their mind, words and actions and who are free from envy.
- Those who have impartial view are bestamong the devotees.
- Those who protect the human beings, cows, Brahmins, vegetation and remainengrossed in discussion of Lord's virtues.
- Those who salute the garden of basil and put the earth frombasil's roots on their heads.
- Those who are beloved to **Lord Shiva**, put Tripund on their forehead andworship Him performing Yagyas facing south.
- Those who always donate water and cereals, cows anddaughters are the excellent among all the devotees.

O great **Sage**! These are some of the characteristicsof a true devotee. Cherish these characteristics and you will also attain salvation in the last."

Thus, preaching, **Lord Vishnu** disappeared. **Markandeya** thereafter led a pious life and observed penance andin the last he too attained to the supreme abode of the Lord.

5 The Greatness of the Ganges

Naradasked: "O great Sage Sanat! Now kindly tell me about such a place of pilgrimage which is evenholier than the holiest places of pilgrimage."

Sanatkumar says: **Narad**!

- Confluence of Ganga and Yamuna is the holier than any other place ofpilgrimage. The extremely sacred and pious Ganga rises from the feet of none other than **Lord Vishnu**.
- Yamuna on the other hand is the daughter of Surya. Even the remembrance of Ganga is enough to doaway with all the sins and making one peaceful.
- This place where Ganga and Yamuna merge is famous as **Prayag in the world**. It is the same placewhere **Brahma** had once invoked **Lord Vishnu** in a Yagya. Since then, innumerable **Sages** have followed**Brahma** and performed different kinds of Yagyas there.
- Even a person who recites the name of Ganga100 miles from Prayag attains salvation. Smear the sand of Ganga's bank on the forehead is like, ina way, bearing the crescent shaped Moon on the head.
- Those who remember Ganga receive the benefitof performing pilgrimage to all the holy places.
- Among other places of pilgrimage, **Varanasi** has almostequal significance to that of **Prayag**. O Brahmin! **Ganga** is the mother of the entire world. Mere touchof her sacred waters salved the 60,000 sons of **Sagar**. No one can describe the greatness of**Ganga**

6 Fate of King Baahu

Narad says: "O great Sage who in the dynasty of Sagar received salvation from Preta Bhava. Who wasSagar? Kindly narrate his whole story to me."

Sanatkumar says:

Long ago, there occurred a king named **Baahu** in the dynasty of **Surya**. He was veryreligious in nature and looked after his subjects like his own offspring. Everyone was happy in hiskingdom, which he ruled with polity and justice.

But destiny was playing another game for the king. With time, evils like envy and ego began to rise in the mind of Baahu. He began to think that nobody else was as religious as he was. These evils in turn caused the king to incline towards sensual pleasures.

O **Narad**! An unconscious mind is the greatestcause of destruction. Everyone, even the better half begin to nurture hostility against such a person. So, the same thing happened with the **king Baahu**. Many neighboring kings together launched a massiveattack on the kingdom of **Baahu** and defeated him after a month-long fierce battle.

After his defeat, the **king Baahu** left his kingdom and began to wander along with his queens. At last, he came to stay beside a big lake. Even the local inhabitants and lower creatures hid seeing the kingapproach. His subjects too had lost their sympathies for him.

Now the life of the king was not more than the death. So, repenting his condition, **kingBaahu** met hisdeath in the presence of the **SageAurv**. At that time, his youngest queen was expecting an issue. Afterher husband's death, she decided to commit **Sati**. But, the **SageAurv** prevented her convincing that her babywould be son would enjoy more popularity than his father had. Besides, nothing is more wretched thankilling an unborn baby. Thus, convincing the queen with all means, **SageAurv** guided the queens toperform cremation of her husband and other rituals. Since then, both the queens began to live in thehermitage of **SageAurv**.

7 The Birth of Sagar

Sanatkumarsays: - "O **Narad**! Both the queens were passing their time in the hermitage of **SageAurv**. When half of the rainy season had passed, the elder queen began to cultivate evil feelings for theyounger. She, therefore, made deceitfully the younger queen to consume poison. But the poison couldnot affect the queen and her unborn baby because of the virtues she had acquired serving the **Sage** Aurv.

After 3 months, the younger queen gave birth to a son. **Sage** Aurv carried out necessary rituals andconsecrations of the child and named him **Sagar** because he was born with the effect of poison."

Sagar began to grow in Aurv's hermitage. The **Sage** had started to train the boy in weaponry. One day, out of curiosity, **Sagar** asked his mother about his father. His mother related to him all the events thattook place with his father king Baahu, her husband. Listening to the fate of his father, **Sagar** took an oathto destroy all those who had caused misery to his father. Circumambulating his teacher Aurv and takinghis mother's permission, **Sagar** at once set out on his mission. His first halt was at the hermitage of **SageVashishta**.

Sagar narrated the whole thing to the **SageVashishta**. **SageVashishta** presented him with a number ofdivine weapons and saw him off blessing him with a boon for victory. Armed with many divineweapons and the blessings of his mother and teachers, **Sagar** defeated even the most powerful enemiesof his father in no time and established his rule over the entire earth. The defeated kings took asylum inthe hermitage of **SageVashishta** who assured them to be fearless. Spies on the other hand informed **Sagar** about this development. **Sagar** at once set out to the hermitage of **Vashishta** with an intention ofexterminating those kings but meanwhile, **SageVashishta** had got all the kings shaven. So, assuming thathis enemies were dead, **Sagar**mockingly said to **SageVashishta**: "O **Sage**! Why are you guarding thesecharacterless creatures? I will not spare their lives."

Vashishta says: "O son! You are great. Now listen to me carefully for your benefit. I have already killedyour enemies, so you will not gain anything killing them again. O king! This

physical body is the root ofall the sins. You will not receive popularity killing the physical body. So, give this matter a little thoughtbefore killing them." The words of **SageVashishta** soothed **Sagar**'s anger. Thereafter, **Sage Vashishta** carried out the coronation of **Sagar**.

The king **Sagar** had 2 wives, Keshini and Sumati. They both were the daughters of Vidharba's kingKashyap. When **Sage** Aurv heard about **Sagar**'s coronation, he visited his palace and returned afterpreaching him. Some months later, with a desire of having sons, both the queens secretly summoned **Sage Aurv** once again and received the talisman for having sons. Meditating for a while, the **Sage Aurv** said: "O fortunate ones! One of you will receive a son who will continue his progeny in future and theother will have sixty thousand prowessive sons."

The **Sage** also advised them to seek the boon of their respective choices. With time, Keshini gave birth to one son Asmanjas who grew in a whimsical person. Sumati gave birth to sixty thousand sons who werevery obedient initially but following Asmanjas, they too began to behave whimsically. Asmanjas hadone son, Anshuman who was very obedient to his grandfather. Sixty thousand sons of **Sagar** soon beganto torment all the three worlds. Perplexed by their atrocities, Indra appealed to the **SageKapil** to get themrid of their woes. With the inspiration of **SageKapil**, **Sagar** organized an Aswamedha Yagya. Indra kidnapped the horse of the Yagya and tethered at the hermitage of **SageKapil**. When all the sixtythousand princes reached **Kapil**'s hermitage, they began to abuse him seeing the horse there. Infuriated**Kapil** at once incinerated them with his curse. King **Sagar** then sent Anshuman in search of his sixtythousand sons and recovered the horse. **SageKapil** assured Anshuman that his grandson **Bhagirath**would please Ganga to descend and salve his ancestors.

8 Salvation of Saudas

Naradasked: "O great brother! Why did SageVashishta curse Saudas and how did he recover from thiscurse by the virtue of the Ganges waters?"

Sanatkumar says:

O **Narad**! **Saudas** was a virtuous king.He ruled over his subjects religiously. He was very fond of hunting. So, one day, he went on hunting inthe forest. He continued his excursion all day long. Towards evening, he reached at the bank ofGodavari and decided to pass the night there. In the next morning also, he began his hunting excursionone again. During the hunting, he spotted a deer and began to chase it. Chasing the deer, he reachedthe core of the forest.

There, the king saw a pair of tigers copulating. **Saudas** was an expert archer. He trained an arrow andkilled the tigress in just one shot. As soon as the tigress died, she assumed the form of an enormousogress. Death of his partner infuriated the tiger, which was in fact a monster in disguise. He decided toavenge the death of his mate. On the other hand, the whole event frightened the king. He held a hastyparley with his ministers. They unanimously took a decision to give up the hunting forever.

Long afterwards, **king Saudas** organized an Aswamedha Yagya in the auspices of **SageVashishta**. Atthe completion of Yagya, **SageVashishta** went to take a bath before taking his meal. Meanwhile, themonster appeared there in the guise of **Vashishta** and expressed his desire to eat meat. Then, in theguise of the cook, the monster cooked human flesh and served it in golden bowls.

When **SageVashishta** arrived, Saudas offered him the dishes made of human flesh. For a while, **Vashishta** thoughtin amazement but soon he realized the whole thing. Indignantly, he cursed the king to become a maneatingdemon.

The king tried to assert his ignorance and said- "You yourself had expressed your desire to eat themeat." With his divine sight, **SageVashishta** learnt that the king had been tricked with. By then, the kinghimself got ready to curse the **Sage** in retaliation. But his prudent wife **Madayanti** stopped him. Thus, convinced by the queen, the anger of **Saudas** subsided. But he

had taken water in his palm, so theproblem arose where to dispose it off for it was sure to burn anything it fell upon. After a littleconsideration, the king dropped that water right on his feet that burnt immediately. Since then, the **kingSaudas** came to be known as **Kalmaashpaad**.

SageVashishta then consoled him. **Vashishta** says: "Oking! Imprudence is the root of all the obstacles and crises. But O king! You have no reason to be sorry. Your miseries will end soon and you will regain your original radiance by the virtue of the Ganges'waters." Saying this, **SageVashishta** returned to his hermitage.

The whole body of the king had turned black. Since then, he began to roam in the forests like a wildanimal. There he ate whatever he found-animals, birds and even human beings. Within six months, he devoured all the animals in one hundred Yojan expanses of the forests. Then he migrated to anotherarea in the forest. One day, in the guise of a monster, **Saudas** was wandering in a forest on the bank ofNarmada. There he spotted a **Sage** couple engaged in carnal conjugation. **Saudas** at once got hold ofthe **Sage** and began to devour him.

The **Sage**'s wife pleaded him to release her husband but **Saudas** did not pay heedto her pleas and devoured the **Sage**. In anguish and anger, the Brahmini cursed**Saudas** that he would die if he tried to copulate with a woman and that he wouldalways remain a monster. Infuriated, **Saudas** cursed her in retaliation: "O evil one!Just one curse was sufficient. Why did you pour down two curses on me? Go andbecome a devil." The Brahmini at once turned into a devil. Afterwards, both ofthem began to wander in the forest. One day, they reached to such part of theforest where another monster was living. That monster too had acquired theformidable appearance because of not obeying his teacher. Seeing them, themonster enquired about the reasons of their coming to that forest. They narrated the whole thing to him.

Saudas says: "O friend! Who are you? Tell me, what sins did you committed. Do not conceal anythingfrom your friends."

The monster says: "Before acquiring this appearance, I was a Brahmin and well versed in all theVedas. I lived in Magadh. One day, blinded by my knowledge and youth, I insulted my teacher. That is the reason of my acquiring this monster's appearance. Since then, I have been eating flesh only and Ido not know how many Brahmins I have devoured so far. Still, my hunger

is insatiated. O fortunate one! Hence I advise each and every one never to insult their teachers."

Saudas says: "What is a teacher? Who was your teacher?"

The monster says: O brother! There are many kinds of teachers but I am telling about the most reveredones. All including the teachers of Vedas, preachers of scriptures and mantras, remover of doubts, protectors, wife's father, elder brother, mother's brother, family priest and own mother and father fall inthe category of teachers.

I had received preaching about all the religions from **SageGauthama** while staying on the enchantingbanks of the Ganges. Once, when I went to worship **Shiva**, I did not greet him. **SageGauthama** did notmind my behavior but **Lord Shiva** turned me into a monster out of anger."

That sort of pious discussion among the monsters attenuated their sins. In the meantime, a Brahmin, whohad hailed from Kalinga (Orrisa), arrived there carrying the holy water of Ganges. The monsters requested the Brahmin to sprinkle some of the waters over them. They also narrated the **greatness ofGanges** before the Brahmin. Pleased with their willingness and appraisal of Ganges, the Brahminsprinkled some Ganges water on them. The monster and the ogress resumed their divine appearance butSaudas remained unchanged. His worries began to mount but the invisible Saraswati consoled andadvised him to recite the Lord's name. **Saudas** then migrated to Varanasi where he continuously recitedthe Lord's name and took bath in the holy Ganges. Thus, he overcame the curse of Brahmini andreturned to his kingdom. There, **SageVashishta** once again carried out his coronation. Since then, **Saudas**ruled his kingdom through religious means and attained the supreme abode of **Lord Vishnu**.

9 King Bali defeats the Gods

Naradasked: "O brother! Kindly narrate the tale of the Ganges' origin from the feet of Lord Vishnu."

Sanatkumar says:

Long ago, in the beginning of creation, one **SageKashyap** had 2 wives **Diti** and **Aditi**. They both were the daughters of **Daksha**. **Aditi** was the mother of the gods while **Diti** had givenbirth to demons. Thus, the demons and the gods were stepbrothers and fought accordingly for thepower and prestige.

Demons were elder. **Hiranyakashyap**, the demon king was the son of **Diti**. His son**Prahlad** was a great devotee of **Lord Vishnu**. In the lineage of Prahlad, occurred the great **king Bali** whowas the son of **Virochan**.

Bali had conquered entire earth and was now eyeing the heaven. **Bali** had 2 ministers, **Kubhand** and**Koopkarna** and an equally prowessive son **Baan**. With a huge army, **Bali** launched a massive attack onheaven and soon a fierce battle broke out. The battle lasted for 1000 years. At last, the gods lostthe heaven to the demons and began to wander here and there in search of solace. Defeating the gods, the **king Bali** organized many Aswamedha Yagyas. Feeling sorry for the plight of her sons, **Aditi** began a severe penance on the Himalayas.

10. Origin of the Ganges

Naradasked: "O brother! You narrated a wonderful tale. Now, kindly relate to me, how did the Gangesoriginate?"

Sanatkumar says:

O **Narad**! Pleased with the severe penance of **Aditi**, **Lord Vishnu** appeared beforeher and asked her to seek a boon. Feeling elated with exhilaration, **Aditi** fell flat at the Lord's feet. Sheintimated the Lord about the plight of her sons and sought that He should help them to regain theheaven without killing the demons for they were also her sons though step.

Pleased by herindiscrimination for her stepsons, **Lord Vishnu** assured **Aditi** that soon He would arrive as her son andsalve the gods from their miseries. Then, the Lord presented **Aditi** with His garland and disappeared. Indue course of time, **Aditi** gave birth to a son who was holding a conch, a wheel, a mace and a lotus ineach of his four hands. The child was named as **Vaaman**. Even his father, **Sage** Kashyap greeted himwith respect.

By the time, when the thread ceremony was about to be carried out for **Vaaman**, king **Bali** organized agrand **Aswamedha Yagya** in the auspices of his teacher **Shukracharya**. **Lord Vishnu** Himself had beeninvoked in the Yagya along with **Lakshmi**.

Taking his parent's permission, **Vaaman** too arrived at thesight of the Yagya. With their divine sight, all the **Sages** who were present there recognized **Lord Vishnu**and felt extreme joy and greeted Him with respect. Even **Shukracharya** understood the motive of**Vaaman's** coming there. He cautioned **Bali** in isolation not to grant any demand of **Vaaman**. He alsoadvised **Bali** to abide by his dictate or he would have to face severe consequences.

But illumined by the destiny, **king Bali** did not pay heed to **Shukracharya's** advice and welcomed**Vaaman** warmly and asked him to seek anything he wished. **Vaaman** said: "O king! If you want to giveme something, kindly grant me 3 steps of land so that I may carry out my Yagyas smoothly.

KingBali tried to dissuade **Vaaman** with temptations of heavenly comforts and other luxuries. But **Vaaman** stayed to his demand that he needed nothing else but 3 steps of land for carrying out Yagyas. Atlast **Bali** agreed to grant his demand. He requested **Vaaman** to pour some water from the Kamandaluon his palm so that he could take a vow. As the last attempt to prevent **Bali** from making a vow, **Shukracharya** assumed a miniature appearance and clogged the snout of the kamandalu. Theomniscient Lord pricked the snout with a sharp stem and pricked Shukracharya's one eye.

Thereafter, taking some water on his palm, **king Bali** proceeded to grant **Vaaman**3 steps of land. Assoon as **Bali** granted the demand, **Vaaman** assumed a gigantic appearance and measured the entire earthand heaven in his 2 steps. While **Lord Vishnu** was measuring the universe, it broke into two pieceswith the impact of His toe. With the tearing of the universe, millions of streams sprang out. In the courseof their flow, these streams merged into a single mightier stream and, sanctifying **Brahma** and otherdeities, fell on the mighty Sumeru Mountain (Himalayas). As there was no other room left for the Lordto put His 3 step, Bali presented his own head for the purpose. **Vaaman** put his third step on Bali'shead and pressed him down into the hades.

Narad says: "O great Sage! How did the Lord arrange for Bali's food in the nether world?"

Sanatkumar says: "Oblations offered without hymns and alms given to undeserving person constitute thefood for **Bali**. Thus, the Lord snatched the kingdom of heaven from **Bali** without any bloodshed andreturned it to the gods."

11. Definition of Dharma

Naradasked:"O great Sage! I have just heard the tale of sacred Ganges. Now kindly describe about thepeople who deserve to take donations."

Sanatkumar says:

- **Narad**! Brahmin is considered as the excellent among all the 4 castes. Hence, to make the donation fruitful, one should donate to the Brahmins only. A Brahmin can accept donationcandidly but not a Vaishya or a Kshatriya.
- Even among Brahmins, there are many categories who donot deserve to accept donation.
- These are- Brahmins who practice astrology, act against the religion, who are greedy, who sellscriptures and other religious materials, who have relations with other women than their wives, who areenvious, ungrateful, singer, who have characterless wife, who are soldiers, priests, harbinger, cook, poet, doctor, who eat meat and cereals given by a Shudra, who carry out cremation and the Brahminswho consume the food given by prostitutes**. Donation given to all these types of Brahmins go futile.**
- Besides these, Brahmins who habitually enjoy sensual pleasures during siesta, who dine during thedusk, who have been boycotted by their brothers and society, who have taken birth illegitimately orafter the death of their real father because of dubious relations of their mother, whose younger brotherhave married earlier and those who are always controlled by lusty women, who act as pimps or remainindulged in mean activities also do not deserve donation.
- Donation, spending to meet necessities and wasting in useless activities are the three fates of wealth. Adonation made selflessly to a deserving person on a request is excellent among all kinds of donations. Adonation made with some desire is mediocre while donation given as sacrifice is of the lowest category.

Sanatkumar then narrated the tale of **Bhagirath** and **Dharmaraj**.

Once, Dharmaraj visited the kingdom of king **Sagar**. Dharmaraj praised **Sagar** overtly. With foldedhands, king **Sagar** requested Dharmaraj to preach him about religion and non-religion and tell himsomething about divine worlds and hell. Dharmaraj says:"O king! Providing a Brahmin family or aVedapathi Brahmin with a means of sustenance is the most virtuous donation. Inspiring others to makedonation to such a Brahmin is also equally fruitful. Apart from these, digging out reservoirs andmaintaining them and inspiring others to do the same thing also bears unending fruits." To corroboratehis point, Dharmaraj narrated the tale of king Veerbhadrak and his minister Buddhiraaj.

12. Description of Religious Action

Dharmaraj says: "O king!

- Those who build temples with earth stay in the abode of Vishnu for 3Kalpas. Then they attain Brahm loka. One receives double virtues if he builds a temple with wood. Building a temple with bricks and stones gives four-fold virtue while with the precious stones one getsten-fold virtues. Building of temple with copper and gold gives hundred fold and crore fold virtues.Those who preserve temples and reservoirs receive hundred times more virtues than the builders do.
- Virtues of a rich man donating whole estate and a poor person donating a yard of land are equal."
- "O virtuous one! Those who develop gardens and parks also receive same virtues. Those who preservethem receive more virtues than the developers.
- One who plants a basil sapling salves his crores ofancestors. Similarly, those who bathe the Lord's idol with milk on Dwadashi and Poornamaasi salvemillions of their ancestors.
- Those who bathe Lord's idol with Panchamrit on Ekadashi receiveeverlasting joy and salvation. Similarly, those who bathe Lord's idol with coconut milk, sugarcane juice, and water containing flowers or filtered water get free from all their sins. Similarly, those who bathe**Lord Vishnu**'s idol during eclipses or on auspicious dates and conjugations receive the virtue of all theYagyas. Those who bathe **Lord Vishnu**'s and Shiva's idols with coconut milk, ghee, honey and sesameoil on auspicious dates assume respective appearances of these gods."
- "Those who worship **Lord Vishnu** and Shiva offering them flowers of lotus, Pandanus, and particularlyoffer Dhatura to Lord Shiva attain their respective abodes.
- Similarly, donation of Guggul (scentedraisin), lamp, water and cereal bears inexhaustible fruits. Virtues of donating land and milch cow to aBrahmin cannot be described in words. It is the case with the donation of knowledge, Shaligram, Shivalinga, horse, buffalo, elephant or any other vehicle. Those who arrange for the cremation of anorphaned Brahmin receive virtues equal to thousands of Aswamedha Yagyas. Those who serve theBrahmin deities or

cow, those who play instruments, bell, and blow conch or clap in the temple enjoyintimacy with divine beauties in the heaven for five Kalpas. Blowing of conch helps one attain the abodeof Vishnu. Even the remembrance of **Lord Vishnu**'s name does away with the imminent crises."

13. Expiation for the Sins

Dharmaraj says: "O king! i am now going to narrate about the religion. Listen to it faithfully.

- If a persontouches or gets touched by an impure or irreligious thing, he should observe fast for 3 days and 6 nights for expiation. He should take bath 3 times a day.
- If a Brahmin defecates during dining, he mustgive up his food at once and take water only. Then he should observe a fast for a day and night andclose it taking Panchgavya only to get pure again.
- If a person dines immediately after urination, orurinates during dining, he must observe a day and night long fast and close it with Havan.
- Thosewomen who do not serve their husbands should be expelled from the home for a period of 12 yearsand should not be helped in any way during the exile.
- Impurity resulted because of touching a womanin menses takes fast for 3 nights to get purified.
- Dead body of a person who had committed suicide should be smeared with sandalwood paste or anyother holy material. If a person escapes an attempt to suicide, a fine of 200 rupees should beimposed on him.
- Those who deliberately eat cereals of washers, skinners and other downtrodden classes and tribes orhave illicit contacts with their women are required to observe **Chandrayan** fast in order to get pure.
- Forthose who establish abhorrent connection with their mother, sister or daughter, self-immolation is theonly way to expiate.
- Those who mate with their teacher's wife formal observance of fast is required.
- Ifsomeone has killed a pregnant cow, he must expiate for it observing **Chandrayan** fast separately foreach of the animals.

One should not use the soil collected from pond's bottom, termite's mound, mouse burrow, barren land, road, cremation ground and ground used for defecation purpose. Use of Panchgavya washes even themost severe sin. If a second death occurs in the family while the purification period of first death is stillon; separate purification is not required. Ill effect of an

abortion lasts for 3 days. After marriage, awoman adopts her husband's name. Hence, oblation for a married woman must be offered by her son orsomeone belonging to her husband's clan. Ashes must be collected on the first, second, third or fourthday after the cremation. One must offer watery oblations to his dead ancestors standing in navel-deepwater facing south.

14. Torture in the Hell

Dharmaraj says: "O king! Those who commit severe sin on earth are bound to suffer equally severetorturing in hell. I am now describing about such sins and the tortures vouchsafed for them in the hells.

- Tapan, Balukaakumbh, Maharaurav, Raurav, Kumbhipaak, Pramardan, Lalabhaksha, Vasaakup andVaitarni are some of the prominent hells.
- Drinking of urine in a ditch full of feces, eating of canine flesh, eating of worms, drinking of semen, sleeping on cinders, stinging by snakes, boring through bones, drinking of bile, biting by ants, breaking of teeth, tethering to hot iron etc. are some of the tortures onehas to face for his sins in the hell.
- Those who criticize Brahmins and dictate them or kill them, drinker, those who steal gold, have illicit contact with the wife of their teacher and even those who accompanysuch people are condemned as great sinners. All of them deserve a place in the hell."
- Stealing of items like copper, iron, water, musk, betelnut, sandalwood etc. is also like the crime ofstealing gold.
- Illicit contact with sister and daughter-in-law and forceful copulation with a woman inmenses are also like having illicit contact with the wife of the teacher.

Our great **Sages** have givendictates for the expiation of such sins. Those who live in Buddhist monasteries or frequently visit there live in the hells for crores of years. Sinners pass initial phase of their expiation in the hells. For the7 births then, they take incarnation as asses. Then for the next 6 births, they appear as snake, diseased people, dog, deer, tree and monitor. O king! Those who long for and have illicit contacts withwomen other than wife are forced to copulate with a pretty but extremely hot copper mannequin andthen thrown into the hells. Those women who prefer to sleep with men other than husband are forced toembrace hot iron statue on a blazing bed. Then they are forced to embrace a hot iron pillar, take bath insaline water, and drink it. They have to suffer these tortures for 1000 years.

- Those who listen to other's criticism with interest have to bear lot of suffering. Hot nails are hammeredinto their ears. The pores thus formed are filled with boiling oil. They are then thrown into Kumbhipaakhell.
- Those who abuse **Lord Vishnu** and **Shiva** are fed with salt only for crores of years then they are throwninto Raurav hell, which is full of hot scorching sand. Traitors and greedy of other's cereals have to eattheir own flesh.
- Those who eat astrologer's and priest's cereals are kept in different hells for crores ofyears followed by their keeping in the wells of boiling oil and saline water where they are fed with fecesonly. At the completion of their punishment, such people appear as Malechchha on earth. Those whotorment others are thrown into Vaitarni. Those who do not perform Panchmaha Yagya or worshipdeities are kept in Lalabhaksha and Raurav hells respectively.
- Those who do not act as per the scriptures are thrown into the hells for thousand crores of Kalpas.
- Those who throw excretion from their bodies or leave parts like hair, tooth, bone, nails etc. in the templecommit sins equal to killing an unborn baby. They are subjected to severe tortures in the hells beforebeing sent into abhorrent incarnations.
- Those who give false witness undergo sufferings in the hells tillthe rules of fourteen Indras.
- Those who do not curb immoral traffic despite being capable go to hell.
- Those who falsely blame gentlepeople have to live in the hell for crores of years.
- Those who give up afast before stipulated period go to the hell named Asipatra. There is no penance for the ones who adoptpartial view during justice or religious education.
- Those who consume cow's flesh live in Vingbhojya hellfor 1000's of years.
- Those who torture Brahmins through their thoughts, actions and words alwaysfall in the hell.
- Those who destroy gardens have to suffer all the above mentioned hells.

O king!" One must repent for his sins before **Lord Vishnu**. Sight of the Ganges and basil, singing ofdevotional songs, magnanimity and non-violence attenuate the effect of the sin. No action bears fruit ifnot offered to **Lord Vishnu**. Devotion to **Lord Vishnu** is the excellent way to repent for the sins.

Abidance to morality is the best way to train the religion. Religion without morality is equally painful. Oking! Now I have related all about religion. Since now onwards, cultivate devotion for **Lord Vishnu** andinvoke the Ganges to descend on earth in order to salve your sinister ancestors. Only the Ganges iscapable of salving one and all."

Sanatkumar says: "O **Narad**! Thus preaching the king **Sagar**, Dharmaraj disappeared from the sight. Itwas due to the severe penance of king **Bhagirath** that the Ganges descended on the earth and salved the 60,000 deceased sons of **Sagar**."

15. Descent of Ganges and Salvation of Sagar's Sons

Naradasked:"O Muni! What did king **Bhagirath** do on Himalayas? How did he please Ganges todescend on the earth?"

Sanatkumar says: O **Narad**! Renouncing all his royal comforts, **Bhagirath** went to the snow-capped, lofty peaks of the Himalayas. There he saw dense forest and herds of deer and elephants playing. Even his hermitage was full of sweet chattering of the birds. Reciting of Vedas and other scriptures was reverberating all around. **Bhagirath** came face to face with the **Sage** Bhrigu who was surrounded by hisdisciples. **Bhagirath** approached and respectfully greeted the **Sage** Bhrigu.

Bhagirath says: "O omniscient **Sage**! Kindly grace me with the knowledge of the path that leads eventhe most mournful souls to salvation."

Bhrigu says: "O king! I know that you have arrived here with a beautiful motive of salving yourancestors. Hence, you are like Shri Hari yourself. Now, I describe about the actions, which please ShriHari. O king, be non-violent, altruistic, virtuous, speak truth and seek pious company to be a devotee of**Lord Vishnu**. Recite the following mantras-

Aum Namo Bhagwate Vaasudevaay Namah | Aum Namo Vaasudevaay

You will definitely attain peace of mind."

Bhagirath says: "O **Sage**! What is truth? What is in the interest of all the living beings? Who are evilones? Who are ascetics? What are virtuous actions? How should one remember and worship **Lord Vishnu**? What is peace? O great **Sage**! Kindly describe about these things."

Bhrigu says: "O knowledgeous one! All such actions, which do not harm any living being, are nonviolence. Actions, which aid in moral conduct and pacify the people, are in the interest of the public. Allthe people who are envious and oppose the religion and the scriptures are evil ones. Those who tread the path shown by religion and scriptures and always engage in the benefit of people are ascetics in thetrue sense. All the actions, which lead to devotion for **Lord**

Vishnu and cause extreme joy for all arevirtuous. **Lord Vishnu** incorporates all the other deities. Having such thoughts like 'I will worship Himwith correct methods' is devotion. Seeing **Lord Vishnu** in each living and non-living things is impartialview. To be in peace and harmony in all circumstances with each and every one is peace. O king! Ihave described now all the things to you. Go now and begin your penance. May it all be well for you."

Thus, with the permission and blessing of **Sage** Bhrigu, king **Bhagirath** started his penance. Hecontinued his penance for sixty thousand years at length in an enchanting place Naandeshwar in Himalayas. Seeing his severe penance, and perplexed by its radiance, all the gods appeared before**Lord Vishnu** in Ksheer-**Sagar**.

The gods say: "O remover of sorrows! O controller of all the three worlds! We all greet you."Pleased by the prayers, **Lord Vishnu** instinctively learnt about the motive of the gods. He assured themto be fearless and Himself appeared before **Bhagirath**. **Bhagirath** felt hilarious and greeted Shri Hari.

Lord Vishnu says: "Your desires shall be fulfilled. Your ancestors shall attain to my abode. But now goand pray Lord Shiva with your full capacity. He will definitely benefit you." Saying this, **Lord Vishnu** disappeared. The king stood there for some time wondering whether it was all a dream when an invisiblevoice announced, 'it was not a dream O king! It is reality. Do as **Lord Vishnu** has said.' King **Bhagirath** began even more severe penance to please Lord Shiva. After a prolonged penance, LordShiva appeared there. **Bhagirath** fell flat at His feet. Pleased by his devotion and prayers, Lord Shivablessed **Bhagirath** that He would hand over the Ganges to him for the salvation of his ancestors. As soonas Lord Shiva uttered these words, the Ganges emerged from His tussocks and followed **Bhagirath**wherever he walked.

Thus, following **Bhagirath**, the Ganges reached Ganga**sagar** at the hermitage of **SageKapil** where theashes of **Bhagirath**'s ancestors were lying unattended. As soon as the holy waters of the Ganges touchedthe ashes, **Bhagirath**'s ancestors got freed from the noose of Yama and ascended to their heavenlyabode. Since then, the Ganges is also known as **Bhagirath**i.

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16. Description of Dwadashi Fast

The **Sages** say: "O fortunate one! You have obliged us narrating the tale of sacred Ganges. Now wedesire to hear what **Narad** asked **Sanatkumar**."

Sutaji says: "O great **Sages**! Now I narrate what **Narad** asked **Sanatkumar**, listen to it carefully."

Naradasked: "I am blessed hearing the pious tale of the Ganges. Now kindly tell me about the fast andrituals performing which, Shri Hari could be pleased."

Sanatkumar says: O **Narad**! May God bless you! You are the supreme devotee of **Lord Vishnu**. That'swhy, you are asking about these rituals. Now i am telling you about these rituals and fasts, which makea man fearless. O **Narad**!

1) There is a special provision for worshipping **Lord Vishnu** on the 12th day ofShukla Paksha (brighter phase) in the month of **Margashirsh**. This worship could be performedwearing white or yellow clothes. During the worship, one should recite the mantra **Keshavaaya Namastubhyam.**One should then offer oblations of ghee and sesame seeds in sacred fire. During the night, one shouldsing devotional songs before Shaligram and remain awakened. Then the idol of Vishnu should bebathed with 5 liters of milk. Similarly, Goddess Lakshmi and **Lord Vishnu** should be worshipped withNaivedya and edible items 3 times. Next morning, similar worship should be repeated. At the end of the worship, one should donate sweetmeats made of milk, ghee and coconut to Brahminwhile reciting- 'May the Lord materialize all my wishes.' Seeing off the Brahmin, one should break hisfast at the end.
2) On the same day, in the month of **Pausha**, one should observe a fast and worship **Lord Vishnu**'s idolbathing it with milk while reciting**Namo Narayana**. In this worship also, there is provision of nightlong prayers and vigilance. Donating the Brahmins withrice, pulses, ghee etc., one should respectfully feed them and break his fast in the last. Donation ofDakshina is a must.
3) On the same day in the month of **Maagh**, there is a provision of daylongfast and worship. This time, 5 kilos of sesame seeds are donated to the Brahmins.

4) On the 12th day of Shukla Paksha in **Phagun**, one should bathe Shri Hari's idol with 5 liters of milk. Then108 oblations of sesame seeds and ghee are made to the sacred fire. Nightlong prayers, feeding of Brahmins etc. are as usual. In this worship, unhusked rice is donated. Therequired mantra is **Govindaaya Namastubhyam.**
5) On the same day in the month of **Chaitra**, there is a provision of bathing Vishnu's idol with 5 liters ofghee and making oblations of honey, ghee and sesame seeds 108 times whilereciting -**Namostu Vishnave Tubhyam.**Then 4 kilos of rice should be donated to a Brahmin.
6) On the 12th day in the brighter phase of **Vaishakh**, there is a provision of bathing Vishnu's idol withmilk and making 108 oblations of ghee reciting -**Namaste Madhuhante**
7) On the 12th day in the brighter phase of **Jyeshtha**, there is a provision of offering one hundred andeight oblations of kheer (rice cooked in four liters of milk) while reciting**Namah Trivikramaay**.20 Maalpuas (wheat flour kneaded in milk and sugar and fried in ghee) are donated to a Brahmin.
8) On the same day in the month of **Ashaadh**, **Lord Vishnu**'s idol is bathed with four liters of milk. Thenoblations of ghee are made and cereal mixed with coconut and curd are donated to the Brahmins. Thisworship is directed to Vaaman incarnation of **Lord Vishnu**. Hence, mantra**Namaste Vaamanaay**is recited all along the rituals.
9) In the month of **Shraavan**, there is a provision of bathing Lord's idol with milk and honey on the 12th day of the brighter phase. Then one hundred and eight oblations are made reciting **Shridharaay Namostute**.Then 4 liters of milk, clothes and two golden earrings are donated to the Brahmin.
10) Lord's idol should be bathed with milk while reciting -Hrishikesh Namostubhyam on the 12th day in the month of **Bhadrapad**. Then108 oblations are made with cooked cereals mixed with honey. Wheat donatedalong with gold to the Brahmins besides feeding them with respect.
11) In the month of **Ashwin** also, Lord's idol is bathed with five liters of milk. Then, 108 oblations are offered with ghee, sesame seeds and rice reciting -Namaste Padmanaabhaaya.250 grams of honey should be donated to a Brahmin.

12) In the month of **Kartik**, on the sameday, Lord's idol is bathed with four liters of milk, curd or ghee while reciting-**Namo Daamodaraay**.Then, 108 oblations are offered with sesame seeds mixed with honey and ghee. This worship is closed with donating 5 types of edible items to a deserving Brahmin, feeding him andseeing him off with Dakshina.

Munivar! Those who observe this virtuous fast for the 12 months of a year attains to the supremeabode. Observance of this fast for 1 or 2 months only is also equally benefiting. If this fast isobserved for a year, there is a provision of special closing ritual at the end so that one shouldn't have toobserve it again in his life. This closing ritual is performed on the 12thday of the darker phase in themonth of **Margashirsh**.

One should get up early in the morning that day and after attending routine tasks; he should take bath, wear white clothes, smear sandalwood paste on the forehead and make a square-shaped altar on theground. This altar should be decorated with jingling bells, whiskers, flags and white cloth. On the fourcorners of the altar, four lamps should be lighted.

At the center of the altar, a Sarvatobhadra wheel is drawn and twelve urns filled with water are kept onit. Putting five kinds of gems in these urns, they should be covered with white cloth. The worshippermust procure silver or gold idols of Lakshmi and **Lord Vishnu** and place them on the lids of the urns.

Frugality is not expected in this ritual. These idols should be bathed with milk containing ghee, honey, curd and five types of dry fruits. It should be followed with proper worship of **Lord Vishnu** and GoddessLakshmi. These rituals last night long.

Next morning, oblations are offered with sesame seeds reciting all the twelve mantras described above. Donation of ten Maalpuas, curd, kheer, ghee etc. are made to twelve Brahmins. At last, all the idols andother materials are handed over to the priest who had guided the worship. Devotee must dine after alland he should not speak during dining. All the desires of the one who observes all these twelve fasts andcloses them properly are fulfilled and he attains abode of Vishnu along with his twenty-one generations.

17. Description of Fast for Lakshmi Narayana

Sanatkumar says: “O great among the **Sages**! Now i am narrating about an excellent fast, whichdestroys all the sins.

- Observing fast on full Moon day is considered excellent among all the fasts. Itleads to fulfillment of all the desires and protects the devotee from influence of harsh planets.
- Like thefast of Dwadashi, this fast should also begin from the month of **Margashirsh** and observed continuouslyon every full Moon day of succeeding months till **Kartik** when it is closed with proper rituals.
- To begin with, one should start worshipping **Lord Vishnu** since the morning of full Moon day in themonth of **Margashirsh** wearing white clothes and reciting**Namo Naaraayanaa.**
- After the worship, the devotee must perform a Havan on a square-shaped altar offering oblations withcooked cereals, sesame seeds, ghee etc. White flowers, unbroken rice grains and water are offered tothe Lord. In the evening, the same things are offered to the rising full Moon also. A devotee must passthe night engaged in religious discussion, singing of devotional songs etc. Next day, donations aremade to the Brahmins after performing usual worship. The same rituals are performed every month toobserve the fast.
- Rituals for closing this fast in the month of **Kartik** on full Moon day are also elaborate.
- First of all, the devotee should build a rectangular canopy and decorate it with floral garlands, arches,lamps, cinnabar, mirrors, whiskers etc. At the center of the canopy, on the ground, Sarvatobhadra wheelshould be drawn with five pillars. Then one to twelve urns are kept on this wheel and on these urns, silver or golden idols of **Lord Vishnu** are placed. These idols are bathed with milk containing curd, ghee, honey and five types of dry fruits. Then a proper elaborate worship is carried out for these idols. Night ispassed singing devotional songs. Next morning, after proper worship, these idols are donated to thepresiding priest. It is followed by feeding of Brahmins. All these rituals are closed with performing aHavan offering sesame seeds as oblation.
- Those who perform these worships with proper rituals enjoyworldly comforts lifelong and attain abode of **Lord Vishnu**.

18. Flagging in the Temple of Lord Vishnu

Sanatkumar says: O **Narad**! Now i am narrating about the flagging fast in order to please **Lord Vishnu.**

- He who performs this fast is even worshipped by **Brahma** and other deities. These fast accords virtuesequal to those of donating 1 thousand carats of gold to a Brahmin or those attained taking bath in theGanges and worshipping Shivalinga and basil sapling.
- The devotee should observe this fast on the10^{th} day of the brighter phase in the month of Kartik. He should worship Shri Hari since morning aftertaking bath and wearing fresh clothes.
- He is expected to sleep before the idol that day. Next day, heshould again perform worship, recite Nandishraaddh along with 4 Brahmins and bathe masts of thetwo flags. He should then worship the Sun, the Moon and Garud.
- Then turmeric, sandalwood paste is smeared on the masts and white flowers are offered on them. Thereafter, the devotee must smear just enough ground with cow dung and produce a fire in an altar.
- 108 oblationsshould be made with kheer in this fire. Havan thus performed is directed to**Lord Vishnu**, **Brahma** and Lakshmi then 8 oblations should be offered reciting - **Venteyaay Swaha.**
- It is followed by oblations offered to the Sun, the Moon and Kaamadhenu.
- The night should be passed in worship and performing Havans. Next morning, the same rituals should be performed toworship **Lord Vishnu**. At last, the flags should be carried to a temple of **Lord Vishnu** and installed at thepinnacle or on top of a column. **Lord Vishnu** should be worshipped with proper rituals.
- Circumambulating thetemple, one should then present Brahmins with clothes and Dakshina, feed them and should take foodafter all. It is said that as long as the flag flutters in air, as much sins of the devotee are destroyed and heattains the abode of **Lord Vishnu**.

19Tale of King Sumit's Previous Birth

Naradasked: "O Sanatkumar! A king Sumit had performed this flagging fast for the first time. Kindlynarrate to me the tale of his life."?

Sanatkumar says:

During Satyayuga, a **Somavanshi king Sumit** was ruling the entire earth. He was veryreligious in nature and a great devotee of **Lord Vishnu**. He served the other devotees with respect andwas a down to earth person.

His queen **Satyamati** was also a chaste woman. Both of them were the great worshippers of **Shri Hari**and knew everything about their previous birth. They regularly donated cereals and water. **Satyamati**used to dance in the temple of **Lord Vishnu** with pure feelings. The king also would install a big andbeautiful flag in the temple on the 12thday of brighter phase of every month. Their reputation hadreached all the 3 worlds.

One day, a **SageVibhaandak** came to visit the king along with his disciples. The king and the queen treated the **Sage** with respect and the king himself seated on a lower seat beforethe **Sage**. The king says: "I am salved O **Sage**! Now order me how can I serve you?"

The **Sage** says: "O king! I am very much pleased with you. Now i will ask you a few questions. Answer them honestly. You regularly install a big and beautiful flag in the temple of **Lord Vishnu** whereas thereare many more rituals to please Him. Tell me the reason for your actions."

The king says: "O **Sage**! I will tell you the reason for my action. Kindly listen to it. In the previous birth, I was aShudra named **Maalini** and always engaged in appalling activities. One day, I abandoned my family andsociety and migrated to the forest where I sustained myself on deer's flesh. But there too, I used to robthe passersby. One day, I had nothing to eat nor could I lay my hand on any passerby. Scorching sun ofthe summer was adding to my woe moreover. Thus perplexed by the thirst, hunger and intense heat, Iwas roaming in the forest when all of a

sudden I stumbled upon a temple of **Lord Vishnu**. It had longbeen deserted and was very much in dilapidated condition. A small lake was also there beside thetemple. In the lake, beautiful birds like swan and ducks were playing and delicious fruits and scentedflowers also abounded in the forest. Since I was feeling tired to the point of dropping down, I ate thefruits which had fallen on the ground. Then I took rest at the bank of the lake.

Since that day, I began to live in that temple. There I repaired the walls, cleaned the premises anderected a small hut for myself. But still, I used to hunt small animals to satisfy my hunger. 20 years passed like that. One day, a Saadhvi (a female hermit) named **Avakokila**, who hailed from a Nishaadfamily in Vindhyaachal, came there. Her family members had deserted her because of sinister actionsshe was involved in. She was thin and lean due to continuous starvation. Feeling pity on her, I gave hersome fruits and flesh to eat. When she recovered, she narrated her tale that I am narrating to you as itwas."

Saadhvi says: "I was born in the family of oarsman, Daaruk was my father. I was a great backbiter, thiefand sinner. My family therefore deserted me. For some time, my husband fostered me but he too died. Since then, I have been wandering from this place to that and it is because of Lord's grace that I havearrived here."

The king says: "Listening to her tale, I married her and we began to live in the temple. Every day we used to eat flesh and fruit. One day, under the intoxication of wine, we enjoyed our time greatly. Weeven began to dance forgetting our physical condition. Suddenly, agents of Yama arrived there andbegan to tighten their noose around us. Simultaneously, **Shri Hari** too sent His agents."

Vishnu's agents say: "O imprudent **Yamadoots**! Release this great devotee of **Lord Vishnu**.**Yamadoots** say: "These are abject sinners. We will definitely take them with us. "These words infuriated the agents of **Vishnu**.

Vishnu's agents say: "They are not sinners. They are great devotees and the servers of **Lord Vishnu**. This woman has performed a dance while this man has installed a flag in the temple. Thus, their sinshave been destroyed and they have now a right to the supreme abode. They have served this temple forthe past 32 years."

Saying this, the agents of **Vishnu** snapped the noose and carried us to the abode of Vishnu in a divineaircraft. Hearing this tale from the **king Sumit, Sage Vibhaandak** felt extreme joy and went to the forest.

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20. Description of HariPanchaRatra Vrata

Sanatkumarsays: **Narad!** i am now narrating about another fast.

- It is **Hari Panchak fast** and is rare inall the worlds. It destroys all the sorrows of the devotee, fulfills his all desires and helps him attain thefour goals of life.
- It is observed for 5 days in the month of **Margashirsh** starting from the 10thdayof the brighter phase till the full Moon day.
- On the 1stday, a day long fast is observed afterworshipping **Lord Vishnu** in the morning. It is broken with a plain meal in the evening.
- Next day, Lord's idol is bathed with milk containing ghee, curd, honey and five types of dry fruitsfollowed by usual worship. Vows of the fast are recited and prayers are made for their successfulcompletion. That whole night and also the subsequent nights till full Moon night are passed recitingLord's name and singing devotional songs.
- Bathing of Lord's idol with milk containing ghee, curd, honey and dry fruits continues in the morning everyday till full Moon day.
- On the full Moon day, Havan is performed with oblations of sesame seeds and donations. On the sixthday, the devotee must drink Panchgavya and worship Shri Hari, feed Brahmins and only then shouldtake meal silently. This fast is observed every month till Kartik and closing rituals are taken up in themonth of **Margashirsh** next year. During the closing rituals, the devotee should observe day long faston the eleventh day and take only Panchgavya on the twelfth day. Thereafter he should worship **Lord Vishnu**, donate honey, ghee, fruits, kheer and an urn filled with water and containing five jewels to theBrahmin. He should then feed the Brahmins before himself taking any meal.

O Narad! Those who observe this **Hari Panchak** fast never return from **Brahma** loka. Those who desire forsalvation should essentially observe this fast. It destroys all the sins like a fire destroys a forest. Itsvirtues are equal to those of donating millions of cows.

21. Description of the Fruits of the Fast

Sanatkumarsays: Now iam narrating about an **excellent fast** for the benefit of the world. Listen to itcarefully

- O **Narad**! This fast must be observed in the months of **Ashaadh, Shraavan, Bhadrapad orAshwin.**
- On any day during the brighter phase of these months, the devotees must drink **Panchgavya** andpass his time in the vicinity of **Lord Vishnu's** idol.
- Then, reciting scriptures in the guidance of learnedBrahmins, he should take a vow to observe a month long fast praying **Lord Vishnu** to protect him fromany unforeseen crises.
- The devotee should since then pass his time in a temple for 1 month. Every day, he should bathe the idol with milk containing ghee, curd, honey and dry fruits and light the lamps beforethe idol.
- He is also expected to pass his life in a natural way without using any artificial thing liketoothpaste or soap. Then he should feed a Brahmin and give them Dakshina.
- According to the provision of fast, the devotee should feed at least twelve Brahmins and donate jewelry.

Virtues of this fast are enormous. A widow woman who has no son, ascetic, bachelor and Vanaprasthishould essentially observe this fast.

22. Tale of Bhadrasheel Brahmin

Sanatkumar says:

- **Narad**! A fast on **Ekadashi (11thday)** in both the phases of a month pleases**Shri Hari** and fulfills all the desires.
- On the 11th day of each phase, one should not dine. Those whodine on the 11th day commit severe sins. Salvation from sins like killing a Brahmin is possible butthere is no method to eliminate the sins incurred because of dining on the eleventh day.
- Brahmins shouldessentially observe fast on the 11th day of each phase. The preparations for Ekadashi Vrata start onthe tenth day.
- The devotee should worship **Shri Hari** in the morning with proper rituals and pass thenight in the vicinity of the idol."
- On the 11th day, the devotee should worship **Shri Hari** in the morning and take an oath to observefast during the day and pray the Lord to protect him from calamities. The devotee must pass the nightsinging devotional songs, reciting scriptures and if possible dancing. In the morning of the 12th day, he should worship **Lord Vishnu** as usual. Then he should feed Brahmins and make donations as per hispowers. Performing 5 kinds of Yagyas, the devotee should break his fast in the last. During the periodof fast, the devotee must not see wretched ones and desist from talking to such people who opposeBrahmins.
- As there is no pilgrimage place holier than the Ganges; no teacher greater than the Mother and no deitymore virtuous than **Lord Vishnu**. Similarly, there is no fast greater than **Ekadashi Vrata** is. O **Narad**! I amnow narrating an old tale. Listen to it carefully.

In the ancient times, a great **Sage Gaalav** lived in the dense forest on the bank of the river Narmada. Hewas very peace loving and truth abiding in nature. The forest surrounding his hermitage was theplayground for beautiful fauna, Yakshas, Gandharvas and Vidyadharas. **SageGaalav** passed his timeengaged in penance. Thus, he lived there for a long time. He had an equally virtuous son named**Bhadrasheel** who was a great devotee of **Lord Vishnu** and who knew everything about his previousbirth.

In his childhood, **Bhadrasheel** used to play with his friends but his plays reflected his religioussentiments. He would make an earthen idol of **Lord Vishnu** and worship it. He also would tell his friendsto always worship **Lord Vishnu** and observe fast on the 11thday of every phase in every month. Hisfriends too followed him. During the worship, **Bhadrasheel** used to wish well for the entire world. Hisactivities pleased the **Sage Gaalav** very much.

Gaalav says: "O fortunate one! You are really Bhadrasheel because even the Yogis rarely have a naturelike yours. You always indulge in worship of Hari, benefit of all and observe fast on Ekadashi. Youalways abstain from forbidden work. How come, you acquired such a peaceful and unconflicting mind. Iam very much pleased with you. Kindly tell me, about your achievements."

Bhadrasheel says: "O father! I have some remembrance of my previous birth. During my previous birth, Yama had preached me about religion." These words surprised Gaalav.

Gaalav says: "O fortunate one! Who were you in your previous birth? What did Yamaraj said to you and why?"

Bhadrasheel says: "O great **Sage**! I was a king in Soma dynasty. I had received knowledge from**Dharmakeerti** and **Dattatreya**. I ruled continuously for 1000 years. During this period, I committedvarious religious as well as irreligious tasks. In the company of imposters, I too became an imposter. Working diplomatically, I destroyed Yagyas. My subjects also followed me and began to behaveirreligiously. I received sixth part of their evil deeds. One day, I went to the forest hunting. There, I killed many animals. After a while, perplexed by thirst and hunger, I reached the bank of **Narmada**. I had strayed into deeperforests all alone. The intense sun was scorching my body. I was about to drop down because of hungerwhen I saw that people on the bank of **Narmada**were observing **EkadashiVrata**. I joined them andstayed awake all along the night without taking any food. But I could not bear the starvation andexertion and died as a result. Fierce looking **Yamadoots** took me to **Yamaraj**.

Yamaraj asked **Chitragupt** to open the account of my life. **Chitragupt** thought for a moment and said: "It's true O**Yamaraj** that this person is a sinner. But now he is free from his sins due to observing fast on **Ekadashi**and passing his night in the company of pious devotees."

Hearing these words, **Yamaraj** greeted me andworshipped me with devotion. Then, he called his servers."

Yamaraj says: "Listen to me, O agents! I am narrating something to your interest. Never bring to me infuture anybody who is engaged in religious task. Stay away from those who always recite the name of**Shri Hari**. Greet them from a distance. This is my order as well as teaching to all of you. Spare all thosewho serve their teachers, love their religion, are helpless, serve the pious one and are truly deserving. Bring all such people who abuse their mother, hate the world, steal the wealth of temples and Brahmins, who are killers, who do not observe fast on Ekadashi, who are short tempered, criticize me and nurturehostility with others."

Hearing such words from **Yamaraj**, fire of penance began to burn within me. More intense this firegrew, more of my sins were destroyed. I acquired an appearance of **Shri Hari**. Even, **Yamaraj** greeted me with respect. His action even surprised the **Yamadoots**. Worshipping me, **Yamaraj**sent me on adivine aircraft to the abode of **Vishnu**.

O father! I was passing my time happily. I did not know how and when crores of years passed. Then I arrived in Indra loka. There i stayed with the gods for many Kalpas. It was after such a great experiencethat i have arrived on the earth. Having the knowledge of my previous birth, I always engaged in theworship of **Hari** and inspire others to follow suit. Earlier, I didn't know the virtues of **Ekadashi Vrata**.

But now, because of the knowledge of my previous births, I have come to know about it. I observed itwithout any desire and without knowing that I was actually observing a fast and received so much inreturn. Hence, i cannot tell how much will one receive if he observes **Ekadashi Vrata** with some desire. Those who devotedly worship **Shri Hari** and observe **Ekadashi Vrata** attain even the supreme abode of**Lord Vishnu**."

The words of his son gladdened **Sage Gaalav**. He says- "My birth has been successful because I got sucha devotee son like you who told me the complete method of worshipping **Lord Vishnu**."